THE HOME CIRCLE

Sonnet—Poets.*

Some thunder on the heights of song, their race
Godlike in power, while others at their feet
Are breathing measures scarce less strong and sweet
Than those that peal from out that loftiest place;
Meantime, just midway on the mount, his face
Fairer than April heavens, when storms retreat,
And on their edges rain and sunshine meet,
Pipes the soft lyrist lays of tender grace;
But where the slopes of bright Parnassus sweep
Near to the common ground, a various throng
Chant lowlier measures,—yet each tuneful strain
(The silvery minor of earth's perfect song)
Blends with that music of the topmost steep,
O'er whose vast realm the master minstrels reign!

—Paul Hamilton Hayne.

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Written for The Progressive Farmer.]

"Uncle Jimmy."

Who Uncle Jimmy really was, his true name, from whence he came, and the cause of his strange and singular life, were topics that had passed out of the provincial gossip calendar long ere I was old enough to be interested in such matters. For the first of my remembrance was seeing the sage-looking old man, known by the sobriquet of "Uncle Jimmy," passing about the village district. He made his appearance in the neighborhood just at the close of the Civil War, when strange men, with strange ways, were too commonplace to excite interest in the minds of the people who were just emerging from the death and desolation of that great fratricidal conflict. Thus, he had become a component part of the community ere men began to cast about to see who was who.

While he was considered by the people of the vicinity—with whom he held but little intercourse—to be an eccentric character, yet, by those who were intimate with him it was readily perceived that Uncle Jimmy's reclusive nature was occasioned, rather by the effects of some ordeal through which he had passed in early life, than from any derangement of the reasoning faculties.

While Uncle Jimmy's home wasn't the most ideal, yet its location, furnishings, etc., evidenced him to be a man of superior taste and culture. On a tolerable bluff, at a sharp bend of the river—along the banks of which he had purchased a small tract of land—with a commanding view of both the up and down course of the stream, he built his house. And, here among his vineyards and fruit trees, which for the most part covered his few acres of ground, he lived his semi-hermit life.

To questions concerning his early career, Uncle Jimmy always gave evasive answers. The fact that he was a graduate of Princeton College, as he claimed, couldn't be scouted at, for he was not only proficient in several modern languages, but read the classics as easily as his mother tongue. Moreover, it was evident from his conversation and from the many books treating on very many various subjects lining the shelves of his living-room, that he was well learned in literature and the sciences. And his store-house of knowledge had been enriched by extensive traveling—he had been far and seen much; and he had a capacious mind and a retentive memory.

Our kindred spirits had drawn Uncle Jimmy and myself into a bond of platonic love. The old man admired my thirst for learning; and I venerated his possession of it. Thus, I was continually with him, and his only attendant during his last illness.

It was nearing the close of an ideal summer day, and Uncle Jimmy had been lying very quiet for some time, with a dreamy, far-away expression in his eyes, when he suddenly aroused and told me that in a small box, in the large chest, I'd find a picture, and should bring it to him. I did as he requested, and found a gold cased Daguerreotype of a very beautiful girl, twenty or more years of age, with her hair and dress in a style of long ago. The old man took the picture, looked at it eagerly for a short while, then gave it back to me, with the exclamation: "Oh, my dear Marybell!"

He then turned so that he could look out of the window to the westward, where for a mile or more the silver-crested wavelets of the river were scintilating beneath the rays of the setting sun. Thus he lay and gazed off into these mystic realms where all the yesterdays, with their memories of weal and woe, are gathered before the dreamer's eye—gazed till the last beams of daylight had glimmered away and darkness lay over the bosom of the peaceful stream.

Then, he suddenly turned from his reverie and called me, saying:

"Monsieur,"—he had a fancy of addressing me by the French title of civility—"come here, my bonnie boy, and sit down by me and listen to what I say.

"Monsieur," he began, "Uncle Jimmy is going to leave you. Yes, the sap is all gone out of my old and withered limbs, and I feel my life tide ebbing fast. These old gray hairs, like the burnished leaves on yonder birches by the river's brink, have passed their summer days and soon will be mouldering in the dust. Yes, the golden sunlight of to-morrow's morn will come up the eastern ways and lay sweet over the dewy fields, but Uncle Jimmy will greet it, nevermore! So listen to what Uncle Jimmy says.

"Monsieur," he continued, "I am a scion of an old New England family. My people moved, when I was quite small, to a little up-country town in New York State. There I spent my boyhood days—days of blessed memory! In the same town lived a girl, who was the embodiment of all that is true and beautiful in womanhood. Her likes and dislikes and mine—save in one particular—were similiar; and our affections were mutual. In truth, we had been lovers from chilhood.

"It was on my return home at the 'Yule tide' of my senior year at Princeton that I found all the social element of the village in a ferment over the new dance, called the 'waltz,' which had been recently introduced from England. It was late in the evening when I arrived at home, so after greeting my people, I went over to the Town Hall where a big dance was already in full swing. As I entered the ball-room, I was almost mortified to behold the bare white bosom and shoulders of my dear Marybell clasped in the arms of a stranger, and whirling over the waxened floor. As soon as an opportunity presented itself I cautioned Marybell against being too familiar with a man whose character and life she knew nothing about. She chided me and said that he was a perfect gentleman. Poor girl! she could not see the danger. This man, whose charming personality and winsome ways rendered him a beau ideal with our village girls, was a comparative stranger to our people. He made periodical visits through the up-country towns as the representative of a firm doing business in one of the large cities.

"I was then of a retiring, studious nature and cared but little for the fast amusements, such as most concerned the young society people of the time. And especially was this so in regard to dancing. For, I perceived then, as I have observed since, that there is a singular attraction about a ball-room that seems to allure every rake from all the country roundabouts. Yet, the one weak link in all my dear Marybell's golden chain of life was her passion for dancing. Nor, could all my persuasive powers break the charm that it seemed to exercise over her angelic being.

"I left home, with the social season in full blast, returned to college and applied myself assiduously to study till commencement. Then, with my diploma, I turned my face homeward, and to a future promising all for which the human heart could yearn.

"But alas for me! As I entered my home village, I heard scandal, scandal, wagged from the tongues of the busybodies at every street corner. I quickly learned that the curtains were drawn tight over the windows of my dear Marybell's home; that the sunlight of joy no longer penetrated its darksome hallways.

"A misanthropical melancholy seemed to possess my whole being. I hated mankind; I hated civilization, and wandered about in a semi-demented condition. Thus, one day, I casually strolled into the village tavern, and there came face to face with the man who had extinguished all the light of my life. The foul fiend was boasting of his deed to his comrades—I rebuked him—he resented it—two pistols flashed simualtaneously—there was a new-made grave in the village church-yard—and a fugitive, an exile, a wanderer over the face of the world!"

When Uncle Jimmy had finished these last sentences, which were uttered in a broken whisper, he turned over with his face to the wall, and I moved off a little ways and sat down to ruminate over his sad and woful story, where, caused from my much loss of sleep, I soon fell into a profound slumber. When I awakened, the morning sunlight was streaming in through the eastern window. I called Uncle Jimmy, but he did not answer; I moved nearer and shook him, but he remained silent. I then bent over him, and perceived that a fixed smile lay upon the peaceful countenance. Uncle Jimmy had been gathered to his fathers.

W. H. CALDWELL.

Walter, N. C.

Commandments of the Home Maker.

1. Make your household one harmonious whole, no matter how small the scale.
2. Use only what you can comfortably afford in good quality and ample quantity.
3. Let your home appear bright and sunny. It is not easy to be unpleasant in a cheerful room.
4. Treat your servants wisely and kindly, and it will be impossible for them to either impose or oppose.
5. A certain formality is necessary to save every-day life from triviality and freedom from looseness.
7. Do not forget that "society" is the death of home life—hospitality its flower.
8. Know how to talk and how to listen, how to entertain and how to amuse.
9. Have many interests and no studies.
10. Do not forget—your home should not only be a well-conducted dormitory and boarding place, but truly a home, the centre and focus of all interests, pleasure and happiness for everybody connected with it.—Harper's Bazaar.

The North Star and Dipper.

The pole-star is really the most important of the stars in our sky; it marks the north at all times; it alone is fixed in the heavens; all the other stars seem to swing around it once in twenty-four hours. But the pole-star or Polaris is not a very bright one, and it would be hard to identify, but for the help of the so-called pointers in the "Big Dipper" or "Great Bear." The outer rim of the Dipper points nearly to Polaris, at a distance equal to three times the space that separates the two stars of the Dipper's outer side. Various Indians call the pole-star the "Home Star" and "The Star That Never Moves," and the Dipper they call the "Broken Back." The Great Bear is also to be remembered as the Pointers for another reason. It is the hour hand of the woodman's clock. It goes once around the north star in about twenty-four hours, the reverse way of the hands of a watch; that is, it goes the same way as the sun, and for the same reason—that it is the earth that is going and leaving them behind.—From Country Life in America.